

THE LEGAL BASIS OF SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY, 1665 - 1865

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ABSTRACT

HISTORY

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This study is an examination of the legal basis of slavery in New Jersey from 1665 to 1865. It traces the laws concerning slavery in the colony from the proprietor period until abolishment in 1865.

The purpose of this study is to show how slavery was legally developed in this northern state and to prove that slavery was more than a national issue, but was also a state issue.

New Jersey was cut in half on the issue of slavery for the same reasons that the country was split in half, which is why this study is so very important. Although no state of war took place, all the underlining issues surrounding slavery were present.

Slave labor was more profitable in East Jersey, with its large farms, than in West Jersey, where the farms were family operated. Since East Jersey tended to have more slave labor, it also passed more laws prohibiting the movement of slaves in an effort to discourage slave revolts.

The New Jersey Society for the Abolition of Slavery and the Society of Friends (Quakers), who tended to favor the abolition of slavery, were concentrated in West Jersey, where the need for slave labor was less prevalent. The Quakers played a very large role in the enactment of anti-slavery laws and the gradual abolition of the institution of slavery in New Jersey.

Most of the research for this study was done at Stockton State College in Pomona, New Jersey; the South Jersey reservoir for primary documents such as the Abstracts of Wills and advertisements. The New Jersey Archives located in Trenton, New Jersey, provided original copies of maps, pamphlets and the minutes of various groups and their constitutions. All the laws discussed in this study were found in the Atlantic Municipal Court Law Library in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

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INTRODUCTION

Slavery in New Jersey differed in many ways from slavery in other colonies and states in the North as well as the South. Despite this uniqueness, there is no adequate book on the subject; there are only periodical reports that concentrate on a single aspect of slavery or try to fit the entire history of slavery in New Jersey into a few short pages.

This thesis, by examining the various laws in New Jersey pertaining to slavery, illustrates the uniqueness of that state's approach to and attitudes toward the institution of slavery. The discussion is divided into two periods: the period of the proprietary colony, from 1665 to 1789; and the period of statehood, from 1789 to 1865.

The thesis covers the introduction of slavery into the colony, the effect of laws governing the importation of slaves, attempts to protect slaves as well as slaveholders, the effect of the "revolutionary spirit" upon the institution of slavery, the laws related to manumission and the abolition of slavery, and the slavery debate in New Jersey. Of particular importance to the study of slavery in New Jersey is the role played by the

Society of Friends (Quakers), who constituted a large percentage of the colony's population. Largely because of their religious convictions, Quakers maintained a steady opposition to slavery and led in the struggle for its abolition.

Chapter I

SLAVERY IN THE COLONY OF NEW JERSEY - 1665 TO 1789

New Jersey, one of the original thirteen colonies that later became the United States of America, was first introduced to slavery in 1617 by the Dutch, the original settlers of the territory, who were followed by the Swedes and then the English. From the time of the earliest English occupation in 1623, slavery was legally recognized by the Concession and Agreements of the proprietors, which stated that slaves, but not specifically African slaves, were to be used as a basis for the allotment of land to settlers. The Concession and Agreements of the proprietors published in 1665¹ provides sufficient evidence to substantiate that slavery was an accepted institution in the colony prior to 1675.

In 1664, the Duke of York (later James II of England) granted proprietorship of the land between the Delaware and the Hudson Rivers to Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. The original grants to Berkeley and Carteret divided the region; and the split became redefined in the

¹A. Leaming and J. Spicer, The Grants, Concessions and Original Constitutions of New Jersey (Philadelphia: Press unknown, 1778), p. 21.

Quinquipartite Deed of 1674, which separated the land into East Jersey and West Jersey. In 1682, West Jersey was purchased by William Penn and eleven other Quakers. New Jersey remained under proprietary rule until 1702, when the two territories were united into one royal colony under the rule of Queen Anne of England.

Unlike the twenty Africans who arrived in Jamestown in 1619 as indentured servants and--after completing a specified period in servitude--were granted their freedom and assigned land in the same manner as white indentured servants, the first blacks in New Jersey came as slaves. Since blacks in New Jersey arrived as slaves, the proprietors found it necessary to enact a series of laws governing their care and protection as well as laws designed to control their movements and protect the welfare of the general public as well as the slaveholders' property rights. Most of the laws were enacted for the latter purpose: to strengthen the power of the master over his slaves. These laws also attested to the rapid increase in the slave population.

The laws that were passed, as well as advertisements in newspapers published during the colonial period and the early years of the state, provide important information on the social condition of slaves in New Jersey. As it was in other states, slave life in New Jersey was very complex.

Andrew Mellick, in his Story of an Old Farm,² gives a detailed description of slavery on one farm at Bedminster in Somerset County. He tells how the first black slave purchased was a masterhand at tanning, curing, and finishing leather. The slaves of the farm were granted their holidays and enjoyments. In the week following Christmas, a party was generally given to which the respectable black people of the neighborhood were invited. The entire week was one of great festivity, and little work was expected of the slaves.

Again, the Day of General Training (usually in June) was another notable slave holiday. The drill of the militia was regarded as a kind of fair and was a time of high sociability. Slaveowners and slaves all attended, traveling in a large wagon. With the permission of the owners, slaves took with them root beer and ginger cakes to offer for sale.

Although slaves in New Jersey did all kinds of work, the majority were used as agricultural workers and domestic servants.³ Male slaves were employed as farm laborers of all sorts: as stablemen, coachmen, stage drivers, sailors, boatmen, miners, ironworkers, sawmill hands, house and ship carpenters, tanners, shoemakers, millers, bakers,

²Andrew Mallick, Story of an Old Farm (Somerville: Somerville Press, 1889).

³Francis Lee, New Jersey as a Colony and a State, vol. 6 (New York: Press unknown, 1903), p. 25.

cooks, and for various other kinds of service within the house or about the master's person.⁴ Slave women were employed at all kinds of household service, including cooking, sewing, spinning and knitting, and as dressing maids, barbers, nurses, and farm servants.⁵

Slavery, however, was not always as pleasant as the picture painted by Mellick. Although no evidence of severe beatings of slaves in New Jersey can be found, this does not mean that they did not occur. Had slavery been as Mellick paints it, there would have been no need for laws protecting slaves from being willfully killed and maimed or requiring masters and mistresses to provide food and clothing.

Under the Quinquipartite Deed, which came into effect on July 1, 1676, Lord York was assigned the eastern province (East Jersey); the western province (West Jersey), which encompassed about five-eighths of the area, was assigned to the Quaker Associates.

Throughout the colonial period, slaves accounted for approximately 8 percent of New Jersey's population. Blacks were not, however, evenly distributed within the colony. East Jersey, which was settled primarily by the Dutch and the Swedes, had many more slaves than West Jersey, where the Quaker settlers maintained small farms.

⁴New Jersey Archives, Newspaper Extracts and Abstracts of Wills, vol. 4, 1761-1770 and vol. 8, 1770-1775 (Trenton: New Jersey Archives Press), pp. 78, 98.

⁵Ibid.

Hence, the majority of the laws pertaining to slavery were enacted in East Jersey, particularly those concerned with controlling the movement of slaves and protecting the rights of slaveholders. Not only did West Jersey omit the word "slave" from its laws, but its fundamental law, which was written by Quaker authors, declared as follows:

In courts of justice for trial of causes, civil or criminal, all inhabitants to come freely into, and attend and hear any such trials, that justice may not be done in a corner, nor in any covert manner; being intended and resolved by the help of the Lord, and by these our concessions and fundamentals, that all and every person or persons inhabiting the same province shall, as far as in us lies be free from oppression and slavery.⁶

In 1682, while New Jersey was still a proprietorship, the law required owners of slaves to allow them "sufficient accommodation of victuals and clothing."⁷

Most slaves received a peck of corn meal and three or four pounds of salt pork or bacon once a week. As for clothes, slaves wore mostly shabby and insufficient apparel made from a variety of cheap cloth. What lay behind New Jersey's passage of such a law is unknown. However, it is known that a well-fed slave was healthier and worked better than a poorly fed one. A good diet combined with proper clothing helped keep a slave healthy enough to work all year round. This meant that an owner could produce

⁶Samuel Smith, History of New Jersey, 1685 (Burlington: Springer Press, 1765), p. 640.

⁷A. Leaming and J. Spicer, Laws of New Jersey (Newark: Soney and Sage, 1675), pp. 237, 682. Note: Laws of New Jersey is a series of works listed by date and not by volume.

more, save on doctor bills, and not have to replace slaves, thereby increasing the owner's overall profits.

After 1682, few laws were passed for the protection of slaves until 1702, which marked the beginning of the reign of Queen Anne of England and the return of the territory to the crown. In that year, Queen Anne instructed Lord Cornbury to secure the passage of a law providing the death penalty for the willful killing of blacks or Indians and a "fit penalty"⁸ for the maiming of them. The proprietors responded to Queen Anne's request by passing a law in 1702 that extended some protection to slaves. Masters who refused to feed and clothe slaves properly were sometimes fined and might even be ordered to sell their slaves. Those who abandoned or neglected insane or aged slaves were also liable to be fined.

Now and then a master was tried and convicted for the violation of one of the above offenses; however, prosecutions were rare. Since a slave could neither file a complaint nor give evidence against his or her master, action depended on the willingness of whites to testify on the slave's behalf.

Queen Anne not only showed concern for the physical well being of slaves, but she also manifested a concern for their religious salvation. She requested that Lord Cornbury, with the assistance of the Council and the

⁸Leaming and Spicer, Laws of New Jersey, p. 540.

Assembly, find the best means to facilitate and encourage the conversion of blacks and Indians to the Christian religion. However, slaveowners were reluctant to permit conversion because they felt that if blacks and Indians were baptized, they would cease to be slaves. When the first Africans were imported in the seventeenth century, some purchasers opposed converting them to Christianity because baptism would give them a claim to freedom. In 1704, to encourage the conversion of blacks and Indians, the New Jersey legislature declared that this "belief was groundless and prejudicial to the inhabitants of the province," and baptizing would not set slaves free.⁹

The value of a small amount of education for slaves was recognized soon after the establishment of New Jersey's state government. The state law of 1788 provided that all slaves and black servants born after the publication of the act should be taught to read before they reached the age of twenty-one. Any owner failing to supply this instruction was to forfeit the sum of five pounds. New Jersey was unique in passing this act since many states, especially in the South, had laws preventing slaves from learning to read. Many masters felt that slaves who could read were dangerous; they could read anti-slavery literature, write passes, and above all, slaves who could read would be able to understand and cope with the world around them.

⁹William Bradford, Laws of New Jersey (Newark: Soney and Sage, 1704), p. 8.

The first law designed to govern the actions of slaves was enacted in East Jersey in 1675. It applied to the three classes of servants and made no reference to race. It imposed a penalty of five pounds and other "damages" decreed by the court upon any inhabitants who transported an apprentice, an indentured servant, or a slave anywhere without the permission of their owner. An additional penalty of ten shillings was imposed for each day's "entertainment or concealment upon any person who knowingly harbored or entertained an apprentice or slave that had absented himself from his master's service."¹⁰

Seven years later, in 1682, another act specified the race of the servant or slave when it levied a penalty of five pounds for the first offense and ten pounds for the second offense upon anyone buying an article from a black or Indian slave or servant without the permission of the owner. The persons to whom such sales were tendered were required to whip the offending parties. In return for this service, the slaveowner was required to pay a reward of half a crown.¹¹

A state law of 1685 prohibited the sale of rum or strong drink to blacks or Indians and permitted only a "moderate giving to a Negro for necessary support of nature, or to an Indian in a fainting condition, without

¹⁰Leaming and Spicer, Laws of New Jersey, pp. 340-357.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 254-255.

selling or taking any reward for the act."¹² This law was quite common among slave colonies. An act passed in 1704 to regulate black, Indian and mulatto slaves reenacted the 1685 legislation dealing with the sale of rum to slaves and established new regulations or substituted harsher penalties for earlier impositions. In 1751, the legislators passed a law reiterating former restrictions against selling intoxicating liquors to servants and black or mulatto slaves without their owner's permission. The Indian population was becoming so scarce that it no longer warranted inclusion.

The above laws were widely ignored for several reasons, a primary one being that money was to be made from selling liquor to slaves. In addition, many masters did not care if their slaves drank liquor as long as it did not interfere with their work, and some masters even gave slaves liquor during Christmas and other holidays.

Because of complaints that white inhabitants were being injured by slaves who were permitted to carry guns and dogs into the woods to hunt, in 1694 the lawmakers of East Jersey prohibited slaves from carrying guns, pistols, or dogs into the woods unless accompanied by their owner or by a white man with the consent of the owner. No person was to allow slaves to keep hunting equipment without the owner's mark of identification nor

¹²Leaming and Spicer, Laws of New Jersey, 1685, p. 512.

was anyone "to lend, give, or hire guns and pistols to slaves."¹³ Due to the fear of slave insurrections, this law was widespread among the slave colonies.

The same act forbade any person to harbor a slave in his house for a space of two hours. Anyone finding a slave five miles from his owner's place without a certificate of permission was to restrain the slave and be rewarded by the owner in proportion to the distance the slave had traveled.¹⁴ The slave did not have to be a runaway; he could have been only visiting. An act passed in 1704 provided for the punishment of slaves found ten miles from home. Another act, passed in 1713, revised the provisions of these two preceding acts.

These laws were passed in East Jersey to deter runaway slaves--one of the main concerns in slaveholding colonies. Many owners felt that if a slave had no place to go, he or she would not run away. People who ordinarily would not care if a slave ran away could be encouraged to take an interest if they knew they would get a reward for the return of such runaways. Laws such as these made slave hunting a very profitable occupation and made it very difficult for slaves to escape to freedom.

¹³Leaming and Spicer, Laws of New Jersey, 1686, pp. 340-357.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 340-357.

In addition to laws designed to control the movement of slaves and protect the property of slaveholders, laws were passed that dealt with judicial procedures for blacks or other slaves accused of a crime. The state Act of 1695 decreed the following:

. . . when any negro, negroes or other slaves, shall be taken into custody for felony or murder or suspicion of either that three justices of the peace of the county where the act is committed, one being of the quorum, shall try said slave or slaves and upon conviction of twelve men of the neighborhood pronounce the sentence appointed for such crimes and sign execution.¹⁵

In cases that involved the stealing of swine, cattle, turkeys, geese or other poultry or provisions, a conviction required that the slaveowner pay the value of the stolen goods to the injured party within ten days. The owner was to pay also for a public whipping of not more than forty lashes to be administered to the guilty slave.

East Jersey in 1704, passed an act that decreed forty lashes for blacks stealing the value of six pence or more and forty lashes and the branding of a "T" on the left cheek near the nose for thefts of amounts between five and forty shillings. The constable was to receive five shillings for a whipping and ten shillings for a branding. If any constable failed to do his duty, he would have to forfeit forty shillings. Any black convicted of rape or attempted rape was to be castrated. The infliction of the death penalty upon slaves convicted of felony or murder

¹⁵Leaming and Spicer, Laws of New Jersey, 1695, pp. 356-357.

continued in force as earlier established by the act of 1695. The convict was to remain in jail at the expense of the owner until the execution was performed.

In 1713, an act was passed that permitted slaves to appear in court as witnesses, but only at the trials of other slaves. Trial by jury was no longer mandatory as it had been in 1695, since the act of 1704 stated that an owner could demand a jury trial and had the right to challenge jurors. For each slave executed, the owner was to receive thirty pounds if a male and twenty pounds if a female. Corporal punishment superceded castration as a penalty for rape, and the penalty for striking a freeman was to be invoked only if the injured party was a Christian.

Most state codes established regular judicial procedures for the trial of slaves accused of public offenses, but minor offenses, such as stealing swine, usually were disposed of without resorting to the courts. Nevertheless, many bondsmen were given public trials. They were originally arraigned before special "Negro courts," which were usually less concerned with the formalities of traditional English justice than with reaching speedy verdicts and inflicting punishment. However, because of the inconvenience of trying black slaves in special courts, New Jersey passed a law in 1768 which provided that slaves were to be tried in the regular

courts. This law made New Jersey the first colony to enact such a provision. New York and Pennsylvania, for example, maintained their slave courts until after the Revolutionary War.

Under the 1768 law, slaves convicted of capital crimes in New Jersey were to suffer death without benefit of clergy. For crimes involving thefts not exceeding five pounds, felonies, and burglaries, more discretion was allowed and justices were permitted to impose other penalties in lieu of the death sentence.

The growing multiplicity of laws regulating slavery attested to the fact that the slave population of New Jersey was rapidly increasing.¹⁶ Until 1702, although the colonists had legally recognized slavery as an institution, they had done little to promote the slave trade or to increase the slave population by other means. But Queen Anne, in her 1702 instructions to Lord Cornbury, one of the proprietors of New Jersey, asked for an annual accounting of the slaves in the province. She also charged him to take care that payment be duly made within "competent" time to the Royal African Company, which was owned by her brother Lord York, so that the province might

¹⁶New Jersey Archives, Population of New Jersey (Trenton: New Jersey Archives Press, 1920), p. 23.

"have a constant and sufficient supply of merchantable Negroes at moderate rates in money or commodities."¹⁷

An act passed by the local assembly, in West Jersey in 1713, against the wishes of Queen Anne, attempted to counteract the encouragement that the Queen had given to promote the slave trade. The local assembly imposed a duty of ten pounds on all slaves imported or brought into the colony from June 1, 1716, for a period of seven years. The imposition did not, however, stop an owner from bringing in a slave from another province. It was hoped that such an imposition would encourage the importation of white servants for the "better peopling of the country."¹⁸ Colonists desired to populate the colony with white servants who, when freed, could better integrate themselves into the life of the province. This situation helped to promote the passage of three state laws between 1762 and 1769 that restricted the importation of slaves. The act of 1762 complained:

Whereas the provinces of New York and Pennsylvania, have each laid duties on the importation of negroes, and this province being situated between them both, and there being no duty here, exposes this government to many inconveniences, and prevents industrious people from our mother country and foreigners, to settle among us; which calls aloud for a remedy.¹⁹

¹⁷Leaming and Spicer, Laws of New Jersey, 1702, p. 640.

¹⁸William Bradford, Laws of New Jersey, 1713, p. 82.

¹⁹Richard Allison, Laws of New Jersey (Newark: Soney and Sage, 1762), p. 72.

The act levied a duty of two pounds for slaves imported into the Eastern section and six pounds for those imported into the Western section. The differential duty reflected the influence of the Philadelphia Society of Friends (Quakers), which included New Jersey, who were frequently attacking the buying and selling of blacks on humanitarian grounds.²⁰ The act of 1767 raised the levy to ten pounds for each imported black; and in 1769 the levy was increased to fifteen pounds.

These laws attempting to restrict the importation of blacks are evidence that the colony's black population was growing rapidly. Census reports show that there were 1,500 slaves in the province in 1715; 5,500 slaves in 1754; and 12,422 in 1800.²¹ The census following that of 1800 (1810) shows a decrease in the slave population to 10,851, a consequence of the abolition law of 1804. Thereafter, the number of slaves rapidly diminished with each succeeding census until the last record, in 1860, showed only eighteen slaves or legal apprentices for life in the state. Though the number of slaves increased constantly from 1715 to 1800, the ratio of slaves in the population remained fairly constant. Slaves constituted 7 percent of the population in 1715, 7 percent in 1754, and 8 percent in 1800.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹New Jersey Archives, Population of New Jersey, p. 23.

At the beginning of the 1700s, New Jersey had the second largest slave population of any colony north of Maryland, with the exception of New York which had the highest slave population. New Jersey's coast counties from Sandy Hook to the northern boundary and the Raritan Valley contained the great majority of slaves in the state. The three Quaker counties of Burlington, Gloucester, and Salem, which contained 23 percent of the state's total population, had less than 3 percent of the slave population.²² From this it can be seen that the institution of slavery in New Jersey was under the control of a minority of the province's population. The effect of the eighteenth century abolition movement among the Quakers is clearly shown here, since the majority of South Jersey's population were Quakers.

The New Jersey Abolition Society's petition in 1785 praying for the suppression of further importation of slaves resulted in the law of 1786 against importation. Similar petitions from the Society of Friends led two years later to the supplementary law of 1788 which enacted very stringent measures for the overthrow of the slave trade.²³ The citizens of New Jersey were concerned about the African slave trade for both humanitarian and

²²Ibid.

²³James Wright, Laws of New Jersey (Newark: Soney and Sage, 1788), pp. 103-188.

economic reasons. Economically, New Jersey lost revenue as a result of the duty imposed by the Act of 1762, since the Act made it cheaper to import slaves into New York or Philadelphia. In February 1786, as stated earlier, the legislature passed an act that ended the importation of slaves into New Jersey. The fines imposed for violation of this law were low, and illegally imported blacks were not set free. But another provision of the Act of 1786 did set the pattern for future gradual emancipation since it marked a change in the attitude of the legislature by permitting the manumission of slaves without the posting of bond if they were in good health.

In addition to laws controlling the importation of slaves, others were passed to regulate the granting of their freedom. Such laws were intended, supposedly, to prevent them from becoming a "burden" on the colony. These laws took the form of antimanumission statutes. The statutory obstacles to manumission, obstacles that the Quakers and abolition societies fought against strenuously during the latter half of the eighteenth century, began in East Jersey in 1713. During this year a law was passed that decreed:

Whereas it is found by experience that the free negroes are an idle slothful people, and prove very often a charge to the place where they are, be it therefore enacted that any master or mistress, manumitting and setting at liberty any negro or mulatto slave, shall enter into sufficient sureties, in the sum of two hundred pounds to pay yearly to the

overseers of the poor and every year to such freed negroes or mulatto slaves during their lives the sum of twenty pounds. Those freed by the will and testament of any persons shall enter into security as above, immediately upon proving the said will and testament, which if refused to be given, the said manumission to be void and of none effect.²⁴

Because numerous owners were unable to post the required bonds, the stipulation that the future of freed slaves be secured stopped the manumission of many slaves, especially among the Quakers, where the movement against possessing slaves was gathering momentum. The effectiveness of this legislation was evidenced by the fact that no further laws against manumission appeared until 1746. At this time, the colonists, because of the New York slave conspiracy of 1712 and the rumor of another slave revolt in New York in 1714, were almost in a panic over the possibility of such slave revolts in New Jersey. Their fears were exacerbated by the French and Indian War, which was part of the struggle between France and England to decide the balance of power in the New World. The colonists were opposed to slaves becoming involved in this struggle since slaves with arms could be dangerous. East Jersey passed a law in 1746, in anticipation of the war, prohibiting the enlistment of slaves without the permission of the owner.

Slave plots, both real and imagined, as well as individual acts of violence contributed to the widespread

²⁴Bradford, Laws of New Jersey, 1713, p. 32.

fear of blacks and resulted in the severe laws enacted for their control not only in New Jersey, but all across the country. Plots and rumors of plots left slaveowners with the uneasy feeling that they might wake up one night with knives at their throats. This fear, which gripped so many slaveowners in New Jersey, manifested itself in a section of the East Jersey law of 1751 that prohibited black and mulatto slaves from meeting in groups exceeding five or moving about at night. The Act did not prevent slaves from attending church meetings, attending "divine services," or burying the dead if the owner's consent had been given.²⁵

Thus, prior to the Revolutionary War, the legal status of black slaves in New Jersey was hardly better than that of slaves in the South. A review of the legislation indicates that laws were intended to strengthen the power of the master over his slave and to render slaves powerless in every way.

During the period of the Revolution, the colonists' struggle for self-preservation almost overshadowed attempts to abolish or restrict slavery. However, such legislation as was enacted contained provisions of great importance to blacks held in bondage. No matter how hard the colonists worked to control slaves by passing

²⁵Allison, Laws of New Jersey, 1754, pp. 191-192.

restrictive legislation, times were changing. The colonists were changing; and political and social changes occurring throughout the country were affecting their attitudes toward slavery. The main influence on these attitudes was the emerging "revolutionary spirit."

The years prior to and during the Revolutionary War were a period of strong principles and convictions. Freedom of contract, freedom of ideas, liberty, and the possession of inalienable rights were concepts that dominated the thinking of the day. Just as the colonists considered England's new colonial policy a threat to their economic and political freedom, they also recognized the paradox of being both oppressed colonists and slaveholders. The Boston Massacre in March 1770 must have greatly impressed many of the colonists with the incongruity of their position since Crispus Attucks, a runaway slave protesting the presence of British soldiers, was the first to fall in the massacre.

Some colonists moved from the position of accepting the institution of slavery to the view that it was inconsistent with their fight with England and finally to the view that England was responsible for the continuation of slavery since almost all of the slaves imported into the country were brought by the Royal African Company, an important factor in England's economic life. The proposition that all men, being created equal, were

endowed with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, was the Revolutionary philosophy that led some of the colonists to believe that slavery was morally untenable, just as English rule was morally untenable. The Revolutionary spirit and Christianity played key roles in the passage of anti-slavery laws and the procurement of petitions from the citizens of New Jersey during the Revolutionary period. Christianity was the more significant of the two factors since it was the Quakers who, out of religious conviction, led the battle against slavery in that colony. Many of the citizens of New Jersey felt that to hold a portion of humanity in slavery might bring down upon their heads the wrath of God.²⁶

While the gradual abolition of slavery was not begun until the post-revolutionary period, anti-slavery sentiment seems to have swept the state immediately prior to the Revolution. Petitions to the legislature from the citizens of Burlington, Cumberland, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Hunterdon Counties were presented in 1773, "setting forth the evils arising from human slavery."²⁷ In 1776 on the eve of the Revolution, six counties--Salem, Cumberland, Burlington, Monmouth, Middlesex, and Essex--

²⁶Lee, New Jersey as A Colony and as a State, p. 33.

²⁷Ibid.

petitioned the legislature to restrict the importation of slaves coming into the state from abroad.²⁸

During the Revolution, however, many colonists feared that a loosening of rules governing slaves while war was in progress might encourage them to desert their masters and adopt the Loyalist cause. But there were those who felt differently:

In 1778, Governor Livingston, convinced that the practice was inconsistent with the principles of Christianity and humanity among people who idolized liberty, asked the New Jersey Assembly of 1778, to provide for the manumission of slaves, but was persuaded to withdraw his proposal on the grounds that times were too critical to permit a consideration of the question.²⁹

Livingston set his own slaves free during the war because he believed that holding them in bondage was a disgraceful act for those "who almost idolized liberty."³⁰

The years of the Revolutionary War brought great gains for Northern blacks. All the Northern states, except New York and New Jersey, took steps to eradicate slavery. Vermont took the lead by abolishing slavery in her constitution of 1777; a combination of the Bill of Rights and judicial interpretation ended slavery in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Pennsylvania, Rhode

²⁸Allison, Laws of New Jersey, 1751, pp. 191-192.

²⁹D. H. Gardner, The Emancipation of Slaves in New Jersey III series, vol. 4 (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Society Press, 1920), p. 255.

³⁰Ibid.

Island, and Connecticut adopted gradual abolition, guaranteeing freedom to future generations of blacks.³¹

The extent to which blacks in New Jersey took part or aided in the Revolution is difficult to determine since laws passed in 1760 and 1780 forbade the enlistment of slaves. Yet slaves from New Jersey served in various capacities for both the state and the Continental government during the War.

Two instances are noted when a slave was manumitted by act of legislature as a reward for faithful service to the Revolutionary cause. Peter Williams, a slave who belonged to a Troy of Woodbridge, having been taken within the British lines by his master, escaped through them in 1780. He served for some time with the state troops and later enlisted in the Continental Army, serving there until the close of the War. When his master's estate was confiscated, he became the property of the state, and in 1784 was set free by an act of the New Jersey legislature. Five years later, in 1789, a slave named Cato, part of the confiscated estate of Woodbridge Troy, the brother of the earlier Troy, received his freedom in the same manner. The act declared that Cato had "rendered essential service both to this state and the United States in the time of the late war."³²

³¹Ibid.

³²Robert Smith, ed., Fourteenth Session, Statutes: Assembly Journal (Trenton: N.J.A., November 1789), pp. 13-25.

War service was a basis for the liberation of male slaves immediately after its cessation. At first no general act was passed in New Jersey to free all slaves who had served in the Revolutionary War. Slaves who had served honorably in the military forces were usually granted their freedom by individual acts of the legislature. Such acts of manumission cited the war record of the slave and set him free for life. The Act of September 1, 1784, however, freed all male slaves in New Jersey who had fought in the Revolutionary War.

Thus the revolutionary spirit did more than spark the colonists to defy English rule; it also revealed the inconsistency between their positions as oppressed colonists and as slaveholders. This realization is what made way for future changes that would take place in America, changes that started during the years immediately following the Revolutionary War, a time of transition with regard to slavery. New Jersey had to make a choice on the slave issue: Was it going to be a free state or a slave state?

Chapter II

MOVING AWAY FROM SLAVERY - 1789 TO 1865

The Revolutionary spirit in New Jersey, which became a state in June 1776, created a climate favorable to manumission: Increasing numbers of petitions were sent to the legislature; anti-slavery societies pressed their agitation; and many New Jersey inhabitants began to support manumission.

During the period from 1789 to 1865, the New Jersey legislature received many petitions pertaining to blacks. Some of these were against the freeing of black slaves; however, this was not the sentiment of the entire population of the state. Anti-slavery agitation developed soon after the first legislative act of 1786, which was passed to regulate the importation of slaves, citing humanitarian reasons.

Members of one group in particular, the Quakers, were highly active in the New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. Most of the early attacks made on slavery were launched by the Quakers, or Society of Friends, who had objected to slavery from a humanitarian standpoint for many years. This group continued its

anti-slavery agitation until slavery was finally ended in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery was formed in 1786 as part of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. In 1792, the Pennsylvania Society appointed a committee to establish a separate abolition society in New Jersey. The New Jersey Society adopted its own constitution in Burlington in 1793, calling for annual meetings of members statewide and for semi-annual county meetings. The preamble, after mentioning "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as "universal rights of men," concluded with this statement:

We abhor that inconsiderate, illiberal, and interested policy which withholds those rights from an unfortunate and degraded class of our fellow creatures.³³

The society's membership was not large in the early part of the 1800s; and the president of the Society stated in 1804 that probably not more than 150 persons throughout the state were active in the Society, whose aims at that time were moderate. The president, in an address in 1804, declared that it was not "to be wished, much less expected, that sudden and general emancipation should take

³³The Constitution of New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery (Burlington, 1793). The original minutes of this organization and constitution are on file at the State Library at Trenton, N.J.

plack [sic]."³⁴ He thought that the most efficacious policy was to "steadily pursue the best means of lessening and by temperate steps, of finally extinguishing the evil."³⁵

Prior to 1804, the New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery had filed numerous petitions with the state legislature pleading for the freeing of the slaves³⁶ and had done much to secure through the courts the rights that were granted blacks by law.³⁷ The Society tried in the Act of 1798 to effect the gradual abolition of slavery; and it finally saw its efforts consummated in a law passed on February 15, 1804, providing that the offspring of all slaves born after July 4, 1804, should be free.³⁸

The struggle for the abolition of slavery in New Jersey prior to 1804 had been led primarily by the Quakers.

³⁴In 1802, the Trenton Association Promoting the Abolition of Slavery published its constitution in order to evince to the public that "no improper or impertinent motives produced the association; and that no illegal, unjust or dishonorable means would be employed to accomplish their objects." Joseph Bloomfield, True American (Trenton: N.J.A., 1804).

³⁵Joseph Bloomfield, Journal of Joseph Bloomfield (Trenton: New Jersey State Archives, 1804), p. 3.

³⁶Several of these original petitions are on file in the State Library at Trenton, New Jersey.

³⁷The Constitution of New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery (Burlington: State Archives, 1793).

³⁸James Wright, Laws of New Jersey, 1804, pp. 252-254.

A leader of the Quaker struggle was John Woolman (1720-1772) from Mount Holly, New Jersey, who was one of the earliest New Jersey abolitionists. He travelled through both North and South as a minister among the Quakers, preaching and urging his associates to do away with slavery. In 1754, he published "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes," in which he stated that slaveholding was contrary to scripture.³⁹

In 1729, the Quakers became the first group to speak out against the importation of slaves. Thirteen years prior to this, in 1716, they had gone on record half-heartedly against the buying of slaves:

It is desired that Friends generally do as much as may be possible to avoid buying such Negroes as shall hereafter be brought in, rather than offend any Friends who are against it . . . yet this is only caution not censure.⁴⁰

This suggestion seems to have been received favorably and to have been put into practice. At a monthly meeting held in Woodbridge, New Jersey, in 1738, it was stated that for several years no slave had been imported by a Quaker, nor had any Quaker bought blacks who had been imported.⁴¹

³⁹John Woolman, John Woolman's Journal, vol. 9 (Trenton: N.J.A., 1754), p. 346.

⁴⁰A. Heston, Early New Jersey (Somerville, The Unionist Gazette, 1889), p. 16.

⁴¹J. W. Dally, Woodbridge and Vicinity (Camden: Cardiff Books, 1933), p. 73.

The first significant piece of legislation to grow out of the Quaker's anti slavery agitation was the Act of 1786 which permitted the manumission of able-bodied slaves between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five without further financial obligation on the master. The only requirement was a certificate from two justices of the peace of the county in which the master resided, or two overseers of the poor of the township. The simplicity of the process of manumission by deed provided by this Act is shown by a deed recorded in Burlington County:

We the subscribers, two of the justices of the peace for said county do certify that the bearer Pomjuy Stewart is manumitted and set free by his master Richard Potts of the Township of Hanover and county aforesaid in conformity to an act of the assembly of this state in that case made and provided in witness of which we have herein set our hand.

20th January 1794
Isaiah Cogwille
Joel Cook.⁴²

However, this act also stated that manumitted slaves convicted of a felony or any crime or offense equally criminal or injurious to the community were within one month of release to leave the state and remain in exile for life or a term of years determined by the court. Any exiled person found in the state was to be sold for the time remaining in the banishment order.⁴³ This law also

⁴²State Archives Manuscript File, Deeds of Manumission (Trenton: New Jersey Archives, 1794), p. 1.

⁴³Allison, Laws of New Jersey, 1794, pp. 239-240.

forbade any black manumitted in another state to enter New Jersey. No black manumitted in New Jersey was to go out of the county where he was freed without a certificate from two justices of the peace of that county, countersigned by the clerk of the county under the seal of the court.⁴⁴

The next important act to follow that of 1786 was the Gradual Abolition Act of 1804, which provided that every child born of a slave within the state of New Jersey should be nominally free after July 4, 1804. Although the prospects for gradual abolition in New Jersey had seemed dim in the closing years of the eighteenth century, the assembly was quite receptive when a gradual abolition bill was presented in 1803. But the assembly was still deeply divided on abolition, reflecting the controversy among the citizens of New Jersey, and the bill was postponed until February 1804. The assembly debated the bill for two days before passing it thirty-four to four.

This Act did not free the slaves at once; it merely limited their service to a number of years. Slave children were now to be apprenticed to the owners of their mothers until the children reached the age of twenty-five years if male and twenty-one if female. If the owner did not wish to take advantage of the services of such children, he was privileged at the end of one year

⁴⁴Ibid.

after the child's birth to state his intentions and give the children to the trustees or overseers of the poor. These children were then rented out by the state for an amount that was not to exceed three dollars per month.⁴⁵

The third in a series of acts that led to the abolition of slavery in New Jersey was that of 1820, which strengthened the acts of 1786 and 1804 by imposing fines and citing criminal offenses for noncompliance. The Act of 1820 made manumission a simpler process since it was no longer necessary for two justices of the peace or overseers of the poor to sign. Now the slaveowner could get any free white person to sign the certificate.⁴⁶ However, this Act did not complete emancipation, for slavery was not completely abolished in New Jersey until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. Nevertheless, so effective was the operation of gradual emancipation that by 1830 the free black population had increased almost 50 percent over that of the 1820s.⁴⁷ One of the largest slaveholding counties, Somerset, possessed only seventy-eight full slaves by 1830.⁴⁸

The movement for gradual abolition culminated in the law of 1846. This Act abolished the slave in name and

⁴⁵Allison, Laws of New Jersey, 1804, pp. 252-253.

⁴⁶Allison, p. 241.

⁴⁷N.J.A., Population of New Jersey (Trenton: N.J.A., 1920), p. 23.

⁴⁸Mellick, Story of an Old Farm, p. 228.

declared him an apprentice for life. It made all children born of an apprentice after 1846 free persons.⁴⁹ When this law was passed, there were less than six hundred slaves left in the state, and by 1850 this number had decreased to approximately two hundred.⁵⁰

Despite the gradual passage of abolition laws, there were those who did not wait for such legislation. Some owners had from early times manumitted their slaves on their own. Private manumission began early in the eighteenth century in New Jersey. The first recorded manumission was in 1711 in the will of Rabakah Stacy of Burlington County, who gave her "nager woman" Jane her freedom and twenty shillings yearly for life.⁵¹

An analysis of the Abstracts of Wills for the colonial period indicates that numerous manumissions were effected despite the fact that the master was required by law to give security for slaves set at liberty. It was also a frequent practice to effect manumission through the process of indentured servitude. When this was done, the slave would have to serve under the indenture, after which he was to be set free. In addition to deferred manumission,

⁴⁹Allison, Laws of New Jersey, 1846, p. 191.

⁵⁰N.J.A., p. 23.

⁵¹N.J.A., Abstracts of Wills, vol. 1, p. 437.

masters also resorted to conditional manumissions of various kinds. Thomas Standford of Salem stated in his will in 1722 that Cornelius Niew Kierke, his Negro man, was to have his freedom at the death of Standford's wife.⁵² A slave was manumitted in Shrewsbury by will in 1756 on the condition that he pay the testator's daughter forty shillings a year.⁵³

The geographical areas in which early manumissions and indentures were greatest were those in which Quaker influence predominated. Shrewsbury, in Monmouth County, a large Quaker settlement, led in the manumission of slaves throughout the colonial period.⁵⁴

While the Revolutionary War was in progress, private manumissions decreased, but this might have been due in part to the need for slave labor to maintain goods and agricultural products for the Continental Army. The colonists also felt that before there could be freedom for the slaves, they themselves had to be free from England. An examination of the wills for the Revolutionary period indicates that only one slave was manumitted in the ten-year period between 1774 and 1783.⁵⁵

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴New Jersey Historical Society Pamphlets, vol. 2, p. 283.

⁵⁵A study of the Abstracts of Wills, N.J.A., led to this conclusion.

Immediately after the War, before any legislative action was taken, the number of manumissions by will began to increase among the slaveholding populace. These wills and deeds were specific in giving the conditions under which manumission was to take place. Slaves were given their freedom at a specified age or on the death of the slaveholder. As a rule the slave was given a small amount of money or work tools with which to begin his or her free life.⁵⁶

The various laws, petitions, and debates pertaining to slavery during the period from 1789 to 1865 bear ample testimony to the conflicting interests centering around the black population in New Jersey. Both anti-slavery and pro-slavery resolutions were introduced and caused considerable debate. In 1789, abolitionists felt that since the colonists had spilled their blood in the defense of liberty, they should not forget the enslaved blacks. They were against gradual emancipation; they wanted the slaves freed at once. Most of these abolitionists were Quakers or citizens from the western half of the state, who really did not depend on slave labor because their farms were small.

⁵⁶This data is taken from the Abstracts of Wills, N.J.A.

The anti-abolitionists, on the other hand--who were known to denounce abolitionists as "wooly heads or Negro lovers"⁵⁷--argued that freeing the present generation of slaves at this time would be absurd, since the country had not yet recovered from the Revolutionary War and slaves would not be able to take care of themselves. Moreover, slaves were the property of their owners and it would not be fair to deprive these owners of their property without remuneration, which would impose a new and heavy tax upon the public. Furthermore, slaves were considered unfit to be free because of the bad habits they had acquired.

The Gradual Abolition Act of 1804 caused great alarm to some of the citizens of East New Jersey, and many of them came together to express their feelings on the matter. A group of petitions from Bergen County, for example, expressed alarm over the dangerous consequence of the law, which they considered "unconstitutional, unwise, and unjust."⁵⁸ They considered it an infringement on the rights of slaveholders, who they believed had an unlimited right to the services of the offspring of their slaves because they had clothed, protected, and supported them in their youth. Moreover, they felt that supporting the children of slaves who would eventually be free constituted

⁵⁷Isaac T. Nichols, Historic Days in Cumberland County (New Jersey: Press Unknown, 1907), p. 9.

⁵⁸Ibid.

an excessive tax on the slaveholder.⁵⁹ The citizens of Salem County submitted a similar petition, containing thirty-nine signatures, in which they stated their grievances against the Act of 1804:

Your memorialists reside in the midst of a population which contains within it a large number of that unfortunate race who are to be affected by the provision of that bill, and we believe that the most serious evils will result to this community from its passage. In this county, as well as in all western counties of New Jersey, there is no white laboring population sufficient for the farming interest, and we do seriously believe that the passage of the law will cause so much difficulty that the farmers will not be able to procure workmen for their farms. Your memorialists need only remind your honorable body that the black population is exceedingly ignorant and prejudiced and cannot be expected to yield that regard to the law which is evoked from the white citizens of the state.⁶⁰

Morris County also submitted a petition in which the signers stated why such a law would be unwise at that time. The petitioners charged that it took a considerable portion of their income for the support of children born of slave parents, a tax not felt by the community at large. The petitioners argued that rather than place an unequal burden on any segment of the populace, a system of manumission should be developed that would make the burden equal. Yet they had no idea how this could be done.⁶¹

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁶¹State Archives, Morris County Petitions to the Legislature (Trenton: State Archives, 1806), pp. 1-2.

Despite all the petitions against the Gradual Abolition Act, there were many petitions for its passage in which the petitioners fought just as hard to get the lawmakers to see their point of view on slavery in New Jersey. A rift was developing in New Jersey and both sides were fighting vigorously to win the lawmakers.

The debate over abolition made it clear that the State of New Jersey was changing. It was becoming a free state and the resolutions of the New Jersey legislature reflected this change.

Between 1847 and 1849, the legislature passed resolutions directed against further extension of slavery in the United States or its territories. Slavery was spreading and the Federal Constitution had placed no obstacles in the way of its expansion, for it regarded slavery as a local issue that could be protected or prohibited according to the wishes of the individual state. Before the annexation of Texas in 1845, Americans had firmly planted slavery in this country. By then slavery was in fifteen states, ranging southward and westward from the Delaware River to the Rio Grande. Many Americans either hoped or feared that slavery would spread even more. New Mexico and Utah were opened to slavery by the Compromise of 1850; and slavery was introduced to the territory north of the Missouri Compromise Line by the

Kansas-Nebraska Act. Many northerners felt that this spread of slavery must end.

The first resolution from the New Jersey State legislature in 1849 pleaded that slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, be forever excluded from the territories to be annexed.⁶² In the second resolution of that year, the legislators, reflecting the belief of some of their constituents that the institution of slavery was a moral evil, resolved:

While we would refrain from all manner of interference with the institution of slavery in the states where it constitutionally exists, yet we would peaceably, but firmly resist by all constitutional means, its further extension.⁶³

New Jersey's lawmakers specifically urged that slavery be prohibited within the boundaries of New Mexico and California, and further resolved:

The existence of the traffic of slaves in the District of Columbia is inconsistent with the theory of our national institutions, and a reproach to us as a people and ought, in the opinion of this legislature, to be speedily abolished.⁶⁴

The New Jersey State Constitution of 1844 did not manumit slaves, even though it made the following declaration:

⁶²Allison, Laws of New Jersey, 1849, pp. 188-89.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 334-35.

⁶⁴Ibid.

All men are by nature free and independent, and have certain natural and unalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty; acquiring, possessing, and protecting property; and of pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness.⁶⁵

So it is not surprising that the cases of the State vs. Post (1845) and the State vs. Van Beuren (1845) were brought by the Abolitionist Society contending that the new constitution abolished slavery. The State Supreme Court, however, ruled that the relation of master and slave existed by law when the 1844 New Jersey Constitution was adopted, and that the constitution had not destroyed that relationship, abolished slavery, or affected the law existing at the time of its adoption. Accordingly, the court ruled that slavery was recognized by law. This decision stood until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1865.

⁶⁵Frances Thrope, ed., The Federal and State Constitutions (New York: Press Unknown, 1932), p. 123.

CONCLUSION

The history of slavery in New Jersey is unique and is a perfect example of how slavery divided not only the North from the South, but also divided Northerners. Although New Jersey's citizens did not take up arms against one another, the state was in many ways a microcosm of the United States.

In nearly all of the English colonies, slavery was recognized and accepted by both government and colonists from the earliest period of settlement. In New Jersey, the institution of slavery had legal recognition from the very beginning of the colony's political existence. The earliest constitution, the "Concessions and Agreements" from Lord Berkeley and Sir Carteret in 1665, specified that slaves were to be used as a basis for the allotment of land. New Jersey, however, is the only Northern state in which slavery continued until the surrender of the Confederate Army in 1865 and slavery throughout the United States came to an end.

The outcome of the War marked a victory for the abolitionists, who had worked so diligently to bring about the end of slavery. They had fought tirelessly to shape public opinion and then to turn that opinion into action.

Their efforts can be seen clearly through the study of slavery in the United States and the conflict between the North and the South. However, the same ideological and intersectional strife can be studied on a smaller scale in New Jersey, which was also split in half over the issue of slavery.

Geographically, New Jersey split earlier than the rest of the country. The split, however, had nothing to do with slavery. It occurred in 1664, when the Duke of York granted proprietorship to Lord Berkeley and Sir Carteret. The split became redefined in the Quinquipartite deed of 1674, which separated the land into West and East Jersey. In 1682, West Jersey was purchased by William Penn and eleven other Quakers. The coming of the Quakers into New Jersey introduced an anti-slavery sentiment that would play an important role in the history of slavery in that state. Despite the fact that the two territories were united into one royal colony in 1702, the split remained during the rule of Queen Anne of England.

Queen Anne's attitudes and behavior toward the slaves were markedly different from those of the earlier proprietors, Berkeley and Carteret. Until 1702, the beginning of Queen Anne's reign, few laws were passed for the physical protection of slaves. One of Queen Anne's first acts was to instruct Lord Cornbury to secure the passage of a law providing the death penalty for the willful killing of slaves and a penalty for their maiming.

Queen Anne also showed concern for the salvation of the souls of slaves and requested Lord Cornbury to find the best means to facilitate and encourage their conversion to the Christian religion. In response to this request, the legislature declared in 1704 that baptizing a slave would not set them free, thus allowing slaves to become Christians without posing the threat of property loss to their owners.

Religion played a large part in the abolition movement in New Jersey as in the rest of the North. The Quakers of West Jersey, who rejected slavery for humanitarian reasons, were highly active in the New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. They were the first group to speak out against the importation of slaves, and in 1716, they went on record against the buying of slaves. This was all that was needed to rip New Jersey in half ideologically: West Jersey on the side of the North and East Jersey on the side of the South.

East Jersey was more industrial than West Jersey, having large factories and farms. As a consequence, slave owners there were dependent on slave labor and identified with the South and its "cotton economy." Also, they believed that the government did not have the right to deprive an individual of his or her personal property without just compensation--and first and foremost, slaves were considered property.

East Jersey, because of its dependence on slave labor, had a large black population. They feared that free blacks would flood the job market and that their economy would drop as a result of the rush of cheap labor, that white people would not be able to find good paying jobs, and that, since most blacks were believed to be indolent, crime and vagrancy would increase. East Jersey's preoccupation with its slave population was reflected in the large number of laws passed to control slave movements.

The citizens of East Jersey concluded that freed slaves would become an insupportable burden on the rest of the population. Because of their dependency on slave labor and their fears of the social and financial consequences of a large number of free blacks, East Jersey waged a strident and effective battle against the emancipation of slaves in the state.

West Jersey's Quaker citizens, on the other hand, tended to be anti-slavery. Because they were largely small farmers with few slaves, they did not fear a flood of free blacks into their communities. Perhaps even more important, they considered slavery morally wrong. Because of these beliefs, they formed anti-slavery groups that put pressure on the New Jersey legislature to pass more anti-slavery laws like the Act of 1846, which abolished slavery in name only and declared the slave to be an

"apprentice for life." This same law made all children born of an apprentice after 1846 free persons.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, New Jersey had a larger slave population than any state north of Maryland except New York. However, this was gradually to change. Census figures show that in 1790 New Jersey had 11,423 slaves and New York 21,324. These figures increased for both states until 1800, when the slave population began to drop. In 1850, the census figures show that New York no longer had any slaves and New Jersey had 236, making it the only Northern state to maintain the institution of slavery.

New Jersey can rightly be thought of as a paradox. Even though it was a Northern state--part of the region of the country fighting for the freedom of the slaves in the South--slavery was continued there until the close of the Civil War and the passage of the 13th Amendment, thus making it the last slaveholding Northern state.

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